



# State of Louisiana

## Department of Environmental Quality



August 14, 2000

M.J. "Mike" Foster  
Governor

J. Dale Givens  
Secretary

### DEQ ANNOUNCES NEW OZONE FORECASTING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

**T**he Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality will initiate a new ozone forecasting and reporting program for the Greater Baton Rouge Area on Wednesday, August 16. **The rolling 3-day forecasts will be issued twice daily, including weekends, at 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. through September 30. Additionally, a daily Air Quality Index report based on air quality readings as of 4:00 p.m. will be issued each day at 5:00 p.m. From October 1 through April 30 of next year, the daily 5:00 p.m. AQI reports will be updated five days a week. With the introduction of the expanded morning and afternoon forecasting and reporting program, DEQ will discontinue its practice of reporting ozone levels at 2:30 p.m.**

Electronic and print media -- as well as the general public -- will find the ozone reports on DEQ's Internet web site: [http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz\\_today.asp](http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz_today.asp), or the Internet web site of the Baton Rouge Clean Air Coalition: <http://www.brcleanair.org>. DEQ will also provide a daily 9:00 a.m. ozone forecast and a 5:00 p.m. air quality report and ozone forecast via a recorded message at 225/765-2660.

Both ozone forecasts and reports will employ the new EPA Air Quality Index, or AQI. This is a scale used to report levels of ozone and other common pollutants in the air in terms of health effects. It reflects levels of pollutants as 8-hour averages. The higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. The 2:30 p.m. report, which will be discontinued, has been reported under the Pollution Standards Index (PSI) as one-hour measurements.

The new AQI scale has been divided into categories that correspond to different levels of health concern. The five levels are: **GREEN**, 0-50 (**Good** Air Quality); **YELLOW**, 51-100 (**Moderate** - unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion); **ORANGE**, 101-150 (**Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups** - active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion); **RED**, 151-200 (**Unhealthy** - active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion); and **PURPLE**, 201-300 (**Very Unhealthy** - active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid all outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit outdoor exertion).

This color scheme can help you quickly determine if air pollutants are reaching unhealthy levels in your area.

The Baton Rouge metropolitan area has exceeded the federal one-hour ozone standard on six days this year. The **Baker** and **Pride** monitors recorded exceedances on May 16; the **French Settlement** monitor recorded an exceedance on July 5; the **Bayou Plaquemine** monitor recorded an exceedance on July 6; the **French Settlement** monitor recorded another exceedance on July 15; the **Grosse Tete, Capitol and LSU** monitors recorded exceedances on July 26; and the **LSU, Baker, Capitol and Port Allen** monitors recorded exceedances on August 11.

Higher levels of ozone are typically observed during the warmer months of May through September, and this period is sometimes referred to as "ozone season". Ozone forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight and warm temperatures on days with little or no wind. While ozone in the earth's upper atmosphere helps protect us from the sun's harmful rays, ground-level ozone is potentially harmful to human health. Ozone is one of six criteria pollutants for which ambient air standards have been established. Louisiana currently meets federal air quality standards for all criteria pollutants in all areas of the state except East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Ascension and Livingston parishes, which have been classified as an ozone non-attainment area. DEQ encourages all print and electronic media in these five parishes to report daily

ozone through the end of September.